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## SOME EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

### FIRST PAPER.

My early recollections extend as far back as the battle of Trafalgar, when the nation was profoundly moved by the death of Nelson. News at that time travelled very slowly. The battle took place on the 21st of October 1805, but intelligence of the event did not reach London until the 6th of November, and was published in the *Times* on the morning of Thursday the 7th.\* It was, of course, several days later before news of this famous naval victory was heard of in the small country town, on the banks of the Tweed, in which I lived. The community was not very demonstrative, but on the intelligence arriving, the church bells were set aringing, and among high and low there were warm congratulations on the destruction of the French and Spanish fleet. As for us boys at the school, we were indulged with a holiday, a circumstance which helped to fix the news of the battle in my remembrance. Being at the time only five years of age, I did not quite understand the momentous consequences of the victory, nor was I capable of estimating the loss that England had sustained by the death of her greatest naval hero. I now know, as everybody knows, that the victory of Trafalgar was a turning-point in the war with Bonaparte, for it entirely deranged his plan of invasion, and turned his conquests in a new direction. Nelson deserves to be called the saviour of his country. At the time, he was acknowledged to be so. The illuminations in honour of his victory, of which we heard by rumour, were magnificent. The illumination in Edinburgh had a melancholy and notable feature. One of the streets remained in gloom and darkness, while all the others were brilliantly lit up. It was South Castle Street, in which dwelt the widow of Captain George Duff, commander of the

*Mars*, who was killed in the battle. In delicate consideration to her bereavement, the inhabitants of the street refrained from any demonstration of rejoicing, and guards were placed to prevent noise or disturbance.

Of the state of public feeling during the heat of that terrible war, people in the present day, who read of it only in history, can have no proper conception. My reminiscences on the subject bring up the picture of universal soldiering, marching to and fro of regiments, drums beating, colours flying, news of victories, and general illuminations. In London, so frequent was the call of 'Light up, light up,' which might be suddenly heard at midnight or early morning, that every family, for the sake of its own windows, kept a stock of candles and small candle-holders of tin, ready for the occasion. The nation was in a kind of frenzy. The war was not on the whole disagreeable. It was rather liked than otherwise—and that was the curious thing about it. Fears of invasion being at an end, there was a prodigious military bustle that afforded amusement and also occupation. The navy and army offered wide scope for professional advancement. Hosts of young men, and some old ones too, procured a 'pair of colours,' and were able to figure in a scarlet uniform. Then, the commissariat was a wide-spread institution. What quantities of food, clothing, accoutrements, arms and ammunition, horses, barracks, transports, and so forth had to be procured and paid for! The demand for bullock-skins, wherewith to make buff belts, was so excessive, as to suggest to a tanner the invention of splitting skins in two, by which he realised a fortune. That was only one of many such windfalls. Little wonder that the war was popular among certain classes. There was a profuse circulation of money, the bulk of it being borrowed by the nation, and only to be paid for by future generations, if ever paid at all—in point of fact, as matters go, the debt incurred will not be wiped out in five hundred years.

The picture we recall had, like all pictures, its shades as well as lights. We have spoken of the morsels of brilliant colouring. Now we touch on the

\* A fac-simile of the *Times* of Thursday, 7th November 1805, containing the official despatches concerning the battle of Trafalgar, has been recently published; it forms a most interesting historical memorial.

more sombre tints. The demand for young men to fill up the ranks abroad and maintain the home defences was enormous. Recruiting sergeants penetrated into every nook of the country, and were loyally aided in their schemes of capture by justices of peace. Magistrates, in administering the law, dismissed petty offenders from the bar on the understanding that they enlisted as soldiers, or allowed themselves to be put on board a man-of-war. The death-struggle in which the country was engaged set aside all ceremony. Fairs and public markets where young men were apt to be caught formed a favourite hunting-ground for recruits.

Throwing our mind back to 1809, we see the little town on a fair-day in spring. The street is crowded with country-people, bent on business or amusement. A peripatetic show of wild beasts, with flaunting pictures of lions and tigers, is stuck up at one end of the thoroughfare, with a well-applied hand-organ to attract customers. Along both sides of the street are stalls for the sale of finery, shoes, and gingerbread, and two wheel-of-fortune men, hackneyed in their trade, are trying to wheedle eager and unsuspicious youths out of their halfpence. In the throng, we see tokens of kindness and joviality. The country lads dressed in their best—a blue coat with yellow buttons; the lasses in white cambric gowns, ribbons, and straw bonnets. For those who live many miles apart, among the hills, it is the day of renewed acquaintanceship for the year. With laughing and 'daffing,' all goes on merrily; and from the kindly looks that are interchanged, we can imagine that projects are formed of united affections and life-long happiness.

Suddenly, at noon, amidst the general fervour, are heard the startling sounds of drums and fifes. The crowd is in visible commotion, and a new direction is given to the feelings. The boisterous but not inharmonious sounds come from a recruiting-party, which is seen to be issuing from a public-house. Advancing in front, and personifying a military hero, is the sergeant, brilliantly decorated with ribbons, and a flashing sword in his hand. How grand he looks in his scarlet coat and his lordly strut, with that majestic sword! Clever at simulation, the party mean business. Along the street they push their way, graciously radiating smiles all around, glad to chaff with any one, and seeming to all and sundry to be the most delightful fellows in the world. All the noise, and finery, and flummery are not without effect. Youths, who, perhaps, had already a little too much in their head, are seen to join vapouringly in the procession, and need little persuasion to plunge with the party into the public-house. Never in all their lives had the poor wretches been treated with so much consideration. Flattery, promises, whisky, made them an easy prey. They took the shilling in the name of His Majesty. Sergeant Kite had them.

The scene opens with the second act. We see the procession with its military display issuing again on its round of the fair. There is now something to shew. The youths who have been enlisted have ribbons dangling from their hats, they carry swords in their hands, and so, in a semi-intoxicated and mystified state of feeling, they march on to glory. The affair is grand and exciting. But a wild shriek issues from the crowd. A

peasant girl in her draggled white dress—there having been a little rain—dashes forward, and throws her arms about the neck of one of the recruits, shrieking at the same time: 'O Jemmy, Jemmy, dinna gang wi' the sodgers.' Jemmy, however, is deaf to expostulation, and the party, drums, swords, and all, sweep past on their course. To the best of my remembrance, six or seven young recruits were picked up. In less than an hour—no time to stand on technicalities—they were sworn in by a neighbouring justice, who, as in duty bound, complimented them for having so patriotically come forward to serve their king and country. So, Sergeant Kite, a clever man at his trade, carries off his prey.

There was a rapidity, a hurry, in gathering recruits, which, in the present sobered-down times, is not easy to realise. Likely young men were in a state of siege. Sergeants prowling about were constantly looking after them. A serio-comic case occurs to recollection.

In the old High Street of Edinburgh, was held, every Saturday morning, a wholesale vegetable market—a sort of Covent Garden in its way, much resorted to for supplies by green-grocers. Long rows of carts, laden with turnips and cabbages fresh from the neighbourhood, were drawn up on each side of the thoroughfare. One of these vehicles, with its stock of vegetables, was in charge of Jock Muirhead, an active and trustworthy young man from Restalrig. Jock had been several times eyed by a recruiting sergeant as quite the thing wanted, and some tempting offers as to bounty and probable advancement had at times been thrown out, but without avail. He was in a good situation. It was a pleasant variety in his occupation to come into town every Saturday with his cart, sell off its contents, and return with the money to his employer. Attachment to his mother, whom he liked to be near, formed a still stronger inducement not to listen to the sergeant's wily persuasions. So matters went on until the occurrence of a family misfortune. The mother was prosecuted for an old debt which had been heedlessly incurred by her deceased husband—who had been somewhat of a ne'er-do-weel—and, to make a long story short, Jock resolved to take the bounty, free his mother from her heavy obligations, and go off as a soldier. Accordingly, next Saturday morning, when the sergeant was scrutinising going his round, he had the satisfaction of securing Jock, whose conduct was altogether admirable on the occasion. Having disposed of his load of cabbages, he returned with the price he had realised to his master, delivered to him the horse and cart, and bade him farewell. We pass over the parting scene with his poor mother, who, by the generous disposal of his bounty, was relieved of a grievous difficulty.

In the hurried way that things were done, Jock was immediately despatched by a Leith smack to Chatham. There he got a week's drill—more could not be afforded—and being shipped off for the Peninsula, he was in presence of the enemy, with a knapsack on his back and a gun on his shoulder, within little more than three weeks from the time he had been selling cabbages at the head of the Fleshmarket Close. The detachment of young soldiers, of whom he was one, happened at the time to be peculiarly acceptable. The force with which Wellington had

followed Massena from Torres Vedras had, through various sanguinary encounters, been diminished by nine thousand men. With the addition of the new arrivals, he laid siege to the strong fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo. This was one of Wellington's most brilliant feats of arms. The siege having arrived at that point when an escalade should be attempted, men who were willing to go on the forlorn-hope were asked to step out of the ranks. With a dauntless Scottish heart to do or die, Jock stepped forward; his name being inscribed in the roll of honour and bravery. It was a daring thing to undertake; but as far as climbing was concerned, Jock was not afraid. He had many times clambered up the precipices of Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. Then, as for fighting, he was not bad at that either, and would take his chance—a most soldierly resolution.

On the night of the 19th of January 1812, Jock Muirhead was ranked up in the party to effect the escalade, each with several loaded pistols in his belt, and a cutlass in his hand. A certain number carried ladders, whereon to climb to the top of the walls, which were bristling with men, ready to fire upon and pick off the assailants. Jock did not for a moment flinch. On the ladder being planted he sprang up, but was not destined to get to the top. His military career was abruptly cut short. He had got to about the third round from the top of the ladder, some of his companions before him having dropped, and in a minute more expected to be in the thick of the fight, when he received a bullet-shot in the leg. His head swam. His grasp of the ladder was relaxed. And unconsciously he fell to the ground among a heap of his fellows. The storming-party who gained the summit were too powerful to be withstood. The fortress was triumphantly carried, and the garrison made prisoners.

What, in the general havoc, came of our young hero? Was he dead or alive? There he lay—faint, sick, in an agony of thirst—until next morning, when a surgeon found in him signs of life, and had him carried to an ambulance, where he was partially restored by the administration of cordials. The wounded leg was hopelessly injured, and had to be cut off below the knee. No longer of any use to the army, the poor fellow was soon afterwards put on board a transport for England, where he got well, and was furnished with a wooden leg. With a pension of sixpence a day, he returned to Scotland to follow his old profession. Jock Muirhead had been such a short time away, that by the market-people his absence was scarcely noticed. And when, in four or five months from his departure, he made his appearance, the only thing that caused surprise and provoked sympathising inquiry was the wooden leg. The leg was a little embarrassing, but did not prevent him from getting employment from his old master, who was glad to see him back, and so without delay he resumed the business of selling his cabbages as usual at the head of the Fleshmarket Close.

Early in the war, there was a wide-spread enrolment of volunteers, who were serviceable in cultivating the military spirit, and making a good show, but were of little practical value. The volunteers were too independent. They were not under the articles of war, and could do as they liked. When any one took offence, he sent in his

gun, which was equivalent to bidding good-bye to the corps. As a child of seven years old, I remember accompanying on foot a body of volunteers to a fanciful encampment of tents, some three miles distant; the business of the day consisting for the most part of a series of frolics, which the youngsters present thought exceedingly diverting. In many of the smaller towns the volunteer system was abandoned. The real dependence was on the militia, an auxiliary force of great moment for the safety of the country, as well as in furnishing contributions of men to the line. As is well known, the militia regiments, which took their name from the counties in which they were raised, were recruited by a species of conscription. All able-bodied men within a certain age, high and low, were liable to be balloted for; but substitutes were accepted; so, after all, it came to be a matter of paying for substitutes—a thing of no importance to those in good circumstances, but a heavy infliction on the poor. There was one way of escaping the ballot that found favour with the rural population. It consisted in joining the local militia, a species of *landwehr*, raised in the respective counties, the men in which were called out once a year for a fortnight, to be dressed and drilled as soldiers, and who for the time being were subject to regular military discipline. The volunteers having disappeared, the 'locals' took their place, and, in their way, formed not a bad reserve, if the worst should come to the worst, which it happily never did.

The regular militia, whose appearance and discipline no way differed from what was observable in the line, were a *tour de force* on which great reliance was placed. Its only unpleasant feature was recruitment by balloting. That was distasteful, even although one might become a member of an insurance club, and for a small annual payment make sure of a substitute being provided from the general fund. In the fiercest period of the war, the pressure for substitutes grew intense. The bounty to be dispensed for one was occasionally as large, if not larger than the bounty paid by government for enlisting into the army. On a particular occasion, in the small town referred to, I knew of fifty pounds being given for a substitute. There were some interesting circumstances which impressed it on my recollection. The taking of bounties to act as substitutes, and then running off, had become a kind of trade among a dissolute and worthless class. The insurance club in the town had been so terribly plagued with specious vagabonds of this sort, that they would almost give double the money to any native who could be depended on.

A substitute was in urgent demand. Advertisements were issued. Nobody would go. Thirty pounds were offered. Forty pounds were offered. At length the offer rose to fifty. A poor man of middle age presented himself. Sandy Noble, for such was the name of this true-hearted person, was by trade a cotton-weaver. He was a widower, with a grown-up family, but they had left him to pursue their own course in life; so he was in a sense desolate. The wages realised by his peculiar species of labour had materially declined, and he was now only able to make both ends meet. Not even that. He had become responsible for a number of petty debts, caused by the long and expensive illness of his lately deceased wife. These debts hung round his neck like a millstone. The

thought of never being able to liquidate them was dreadful.

One day, as he sat on his loom, meditating on the state of his affairs, a neighbour came in to announce the intelligence that fifty pounds had just been offered for a substitute. Making no remark on this piece of news, Sandy, when alone, took a slate, and calculated that fifty pounds would clear him. His mind was instantly made up. For two days and a night he worked with desperation to finish the web he was engaged upon. Having executed his task, and settled with his employer (the father of the present writer), he walked off to the secretary of the insurance club, and coming in the nick of time, was thankfully accepted as the required substitute. The militia authorities were in a fume at the delay, and a sergeant had been despatched to bring the man who had been balloted for, otherwise he would be treated as a deserter. As the recognised substitute, Sandy, in a few quiet words, pacified the sergeant. 'Just gie me half an hour,' said he, 'and I'll be ready to gang wi' ye.' The half-hour was given, and devoted to a noble act of integrity, such as, we fear, is rarely presented in matters of this nature. With the fifty pounds in his pocket, Sandy went from one end of the town to the other, paying debt after debt as he went along—fifteen and sixpence to one, three pounds eleven and threepence to another, and so on, not leaving a single shilling undischarged. When all was over, he mounted a small bundle on the end of a stick, and, in a calm, self-satisfied mood, he trudged away with the sergeant to headquarters. The name of Sandy Noble deserves to go down in the roll of honour with that of Jock Muirhead.

The war, as we see, with its innumerable horrors, was not all bad. It evoked endurance, courage, manliness, a disposition to make a sacrifice of even life itself for the public good. To take the two obscure incidents just recorded, there was a grandeur in the honesty and disinterestedness of Jock Muirhead and Sandy Noble, that gives dignity to human nature. The very knowledge that there were two such true-hearted beings in humble life is gratifying, though, no doubt, many similar cases could be mentioned. What a pity, as I sometimes musingly consider, that Peace with its manifold blessings should be so conspicuously signalled by successive crops of idle whimsicalities and crochets, as if people were in want of something with a due amount of agony to think about!

Excepting that there was a grudge on account of the ballot, the militia were far from unpopular. The spending of six to twelve months in a country town imparted a fine variety and liveliness to a generally dullish society. The people liked to see a regiment arrive. There were daily parades, balls, and picnics. The band played night and morning. The officers made themselves mightily agreeable with their jokes, anecdotes, and accomplishments. Hotels and lodgings were well occupied. Tradesmen flourished. Every regiment had some peculiar characteristic. Some were more grave than others. The Westminster had a strong tinge of methodism. In their ranks they had a number of stirring preachers. I recollect seeing a man in his red coat vehemently holding forth to a crowded congregation in the pulpit of a meeting-house—the scene possibly not unlike what was witnessed among the troops in the time of the Commonwealth. The red-coated preachers

certainly stirred up the religious sentiment in the town, but everything drifted back to the old condition of affairs on the departure of the corps. There was another characteristic. Some of the regiments gave encouragement to a harmless oddity, who walked in front on the march, and regularly appeared in lounging fashion at parades. Perhaps he believed himself to be a soldier, and nobody thought of undeceiving him. He was dressed in the cast-off suit of clothes of a commanding officer, with cocked-hat and feather and sword. Like an authorised court jester, he seemed to be privileged to do and say funny things for the general amusement. One of these oddities had a short leg and a long one, and his grotesquely limping gait added piquancy to his appearance. Complimentarily called 'the general,' the oddity in his puffed-up grandeur might be styled the *farceur du régiment*.

In point of morals it is customary to look with a certain degree of disfavour on military life. Such, however, was the good discipline maintained among these militia regiments, that I cannot remember anything to specially find fault with. They, on the contrary, gave an intellectual fillip to the place. Some of the officers were good artists. Others brought with them books of a superior class, about which they conversed in the houses they visited. They received London newspapers, which were prized for their original and copious news of the war, also for comments on public affairs not to be found in the timid provincial press of that day. The militia officers were still more popular in making the natives acquainted with English outdoor sports until then unknown. I first saw cricket played by officers of the Cambridgeshire militia on the green margin of the Tweed. Melodies, which few had heard of, were introduced at private evening parties. Some of these I listened to with ravished ears—one in particular, the charming air, *Cease your Funning*, which was exquisitely played on the octave flute by Carnaby, a young and accomplished officer in the Ross-shire militia. In wakeful nights, even at this long distant time, when 'a' are dead and gane, I think of Carnaby and his flute; snatching in the recollection a joy that helps to gilden the sunset of existence.

W. C.

#### SHIPWRECKS.

THE wreck-chart of the British Isles for 1872—the latest issued by the Royal National Life-boat Institution—now lies before us. It consists of a well executed skeleton-map of Great Britain and Ireland, the shores of which are depicted fringed with black and red dots, scattered up and down and clustered here and there apparently without regard to mathematical regularity or geographical order. Such a map has not yet found its way into schools, nor is it likely to do so, notwithstanding that we live in the days of revised codes, compulsory education, and extra grants for 'special subjects.'

The total number of wrecks that occur in any one year on the coasts and in the seas of the United Kingdom can now be ascertained with perfect accuracy from the Register of the Board of Trade. In 1872 it amounted to 2381, representing a registered tonnage of 581,000 tons, with crews of 22,785 men and boys, and the loss of life consequent upon



these is estimated at 590. Of the 2381 ships, 1878 are known to have belonged to Great Britain and its dependencies, with British certificates of registry, 1156 of which were employed in the British coasting-trade, and 722 in the foreign and home trade. From the returns published by the Registrar-general of Seamen, we learn that on the 31st December 1873 the number of British vessels registered, exclusive of river-steamers, was 20,799, having a total tonnage of 5,473,932, and crews over 200,000; so that in the course of the year 1872 nearly fourteen in every hundred of our mercantile marine was either wholly lost or damaged by collision or other casualty. It is in evidence that the loss by total wrecks cannot be less than one million pounds sterling yearly, and by partial, half a million; making together a million and a half as the annual loss to the country from the disasters on our own coasts alone. It is interesting to compare with this summary that of previous years. From 1852, lists of wrecks have been carefully kept by the Board of Trade, and dividing the period from that year till the end of the year 1871 into four periods of five years each, we find the average number to remain pretty steady, the general average being 1445. It is gratifying further to note that, while the number of wrecks has increased with the increase of our shipping, the number of lives lost at sea has decreased, a result which must be attributed to the extension of the Life-boat Institution, and the improved apparatus at their command. During the five years from 1852 to 1856, 4148 lives were lost by shipwreck, or an average of 830; while in 1872, as we have seen, out of twice the number of wrecks, there were only 590. In 1850 the total wrecks on the coast were 681, and the total lives lost 784. There were then only 96 life-boats in the United Kingdom, and about one-half of these were unserviceable; now there are upwards of 240, all in as thorough a state of efficiency as human ingenuity and a disciplined crew can render them. In 1854, when no fewer than 1549 persons were drowned, the number saved through the aid of the life-boat was 355; while in 1872 there were 739 saved, and if ship and shore boats are included, the enormous number of 4634.

Let us now examine the chart to discover if any law as to the distribution of wrecks can be traced. It may be of importance to bear in mind that the east and west sea-boards of triangular Britain are each about 800 miles in length, including inlets; the south, 400; while that of circular Ireland extends to 1400. Of the whole number of casualties of every kind which occurred during 1872, 885 were on the east coast, 550 on the west, 276 on the south, 198 around Ireland, and 49 among the islands adjacent to Great Britain. The pictorial aid of the map will, however, convey to the mind a clearer idea of these marine disasters than it is possible to acquire from any amount of 'dry statistics.' A mere cursory glance at it is enough to shew that the east, and especially the south-east coast of England, with regard to wrecks, claims a fatal pre-eminence over every other part; that the south coast is comparatively free; the west intermediate between the other two; and that Ireland—emphatically its west sea-board—is the most exempt of all.

We will now proceed to survey the coast-line more minutely. Starting from the extreme north-

eastern point, we find a comparatively safe sea, till we reach the Ness of Fife. The wrecks on the east of Scotland are but an insignificant fraction, as compared with those of England, not exceeding sixty in all from Cape Wrath as far southward as Anstruther, and this notwithstanding the almost total absence of harbours of refuge throughout its whole length. The Firth of Forth is very fairly represented with black dots, the Bass Rock collecting a little group around itself. From this point, there is a thin but continuous line to the mouth of the Tyne. Here the stream widens, and flows on uninterruptedly as far as Flamborough Head, detached lines also beginning to appear. The low-lying Yorkshire coast from Bridlington Bay to Spurn Head shews but few wrecks, but on entering the Humber, there is an almost unbroken series. Thence southward to Lynn there is a very thin, straggling line; but along the Norfolk coast the defect is fairly made up. At Great Yarmouth there is an immense congregation of these dismal dots, which seem to disperse by degrees till near the Thames estuary, when, rallying by degrees, they assemble around the Goodwin Sands in greater numbers than ever. Along the south coast, as we have already said, the calamities are comparatively few. There is a fair group as we round Dungeness, a sprinkling off Beachy Head, a greater crowd about the Bill of Portland, and a thin streak onwards to the Eddystone. Outside the famous lighthouse, the sea is comparatively free, but inside the casualties are distressingly numerous. We have then a very safe sail till the Lizard is sighted; but here the path of disaster recommences. On the whole, however, Cornwall does not stand out so conspicuously as might be expected, considering the horrible tales one has read of wrecks and wreckers on its shores. Proceeding northward, we get among a thicker crowd than we encountered in the Channel, more especially at the mouth of the Severn, along the peninsula of Pembroke, around the Isle of Anglesea, within the estuaries of the Mersey, Dee, and Clyde. The whole line of the Hebrides shews but four dots; the Orkney and Shetland Islands between them fourteen. The Scilly Isles give ten, Lundy nine, Man twenty. On the north, east, and south-east coasts of Ireland, from Lough Swilly to Cape Clear, the chart indicates a somewhat active work of destruction, the dots clustering most thickly around the important ports of Belfast, Dublin, Waterford, and Cork; but the west coast, with all its long inlets and jagged headlands, seems to maintain an almost halcyon reign of security, seventeen wrecks in all appearing along its entire length. Such is a general description of the chart.

In addition to the physical agents which act directly in producing shipwreck, and which must be considered as more or less inevitable, there are others, again, which play a lamentable part, but for which a remedy can be easily found. Under this head may be classed unseaworthiness and overloading of vessels; deficiency of anchors, cables, and other naval equipments; ill-regulated compasses; want of good charts; and incompetency of masters. We have seen that the east coast shews a much larger proportion of wrecks than either the south or west. It is usual to attribute this to the larger number of vessels that frequent the North Sea, and the presence in it of the great sandbanks. But, after making due

allowance for these two operating causes, there remains, we think, some further explanation to be given. Looking to the width of the English and St George's Channels, as compared with that of the German Ocean, they may be said to be more densely crowded with ships. But there is a great difference in the general character of these. A very large number of the vessels that pass up and down the east coast are colliers, which, as a general rule, are ill constructed and deeply laden; while the channels swarm with steamers and large foreign-going ships. We have seen that it is not among these latter that the greater proportion of casualties arise, but among our smaller coasting craft, two-thirds of the whole number being confined to them. Now, it is just in this class of vessels that we might expect to find the deficiencies enumerated above, and it is suspected that to our system of marine insurance a large portion of the blame must be attached. Where indemnity against pecuniary loss, in the event of the wreck of the ship, is secured in this form, the owner has less inducement in looking to the skill and competency of the master, and the master in exercising the necessary watchfulness for the safety of the ship. The increasing number of collisions that arise year by year would seem to bear out this supposition. In 1857, out of a total number of 1015 wrecks, 57 were attributable to this cause; while 1872 gives 409 out of 1958. In view of all this, there is no one but must fully sympathise with Mr Plimsoll and the Board of Trade in their noble endeavours to protect the lives of our seamen by insisting upon a rigorous inquiry into the competency of the master and the condition of the ship before she puts to sea. Local currents, fogs, sand-banks, imperfect charts, are other powerful causes in producing the shipwrecks that disfigure our coast; but it is satisfactory to know that the influence of these is being greatly lessened by the more intimate knowledge we are acquiring in regard to the position and character of each. The charts and instructions to mariners now issued by the Board of Trade and Admiralty are in the highest degree reliable; and if those published by private firms were equally correct, there would be little to complain of on this score. With a trustworthy chart and a good knowledge of his craft, a watchful master will, as a rule, be able to navigate his ship in the midst of fog, through currents, keeping clear of projecting headland, sunken reef, and treacherous sand-bank. Captain Basil Hall tells us, in his *Fragments of Voyages and Travels*, on a voyage from California to Rio, the first land he beheld after leaving, on the clearing away of a fog, was the very port to which he was bound. With the compass, sextant, and chart, he was thus enabled to accomplish successfully a voyage of many thousand miles; and the same feat is performed by many of our coasting captains, who often are unable to descry land from the port of departure to that of arrival. Formerly, the want of lights, buoys, and beacons led to a considerable number of shipwrecks, but danger from this cause is gradually disappearing under the labours of the Trinity House and the Commissioners of Northern Light-houses.

Such catastrophes as the stranding of the *Royal Charter* on the Conway coast, the foundering of the *London* in the Bay of Biscay, the running down of the *Northfleet* in the English Channel, and

the loss of the *Schiller* on the Scilly Isles, startle and appal; but others, again, have their ludicrous side, and some may be even said to have served beneficial purposes. Wrecks of this sort generally take place in calm, but foggy weather, and arise mainly from an inattention to the three *Zs* of Jack's education—Lead, Latitude, and Look-out. The writer of this article resided in Orkney for twenty years, and took a note of the principal wrecks that occurred there during that period. The islands as a rule are rocky and precipitous on the west, and against the tall cliff the broad Atlantic sweeps with unbroken force—during a gale, throwing its gigantic waves not only far upward into the sky, but also for a considerable distance inland. The eastern side, again, is generally flat, one of the group, Sanday, being barely above the level of the water. With a boisterous sea all round, and with rapid tides and conflicting currents between the several islands, one would expect to hear of numerous wrecks and a corresponding loss of life; but such can hardly be said to be the case now, whatever it may have been formerly. Even those that have occurred in recent years have been within some cozy bay on the east sea-board, and during comparatively serene weather, a good proportion of them being foreign emigrant ships. The only dangerous place on the west—dangerous at least as far as shipwreck is concerned—is Hoy Sound, which is the entrance to Stromness Harbour, and which has been the scene of several melancholy disasters. This state of matters affords a striking contrast to that of former times, when, through wrecks, fortunes were sometimes made by a few of the islanders, and a living by a larger number. It is reported of one of their ministers, that while conducting public worship he prayed that the Almighty would guard over all who went down to the sea in ships, but if it was His sovereign will that there should be wrecks that winter, He would not in His mercy forget the poor island of Sanday. Magnus still continues to earn a fair penny from these ravages of the deep, but now only through the portals of a keen speculation. The wreck of a large vessel among the islands usually causes a flutter in the breasts of the merchants of Kirkwall.

It would take a separate article to narrate all the notions and traditions respecting shipwrecks that are still current among the dwellers of these northern islands. Sir Walter Scott has made good use of some in his novel of the *Pirate*, but it is gratifying to be able to write that the superstitious prejudice against rescuing a shipwrecked sailor has utterly vanished along with the genus *Snailsfoot*, who probably served to keep it alive. It is worth mention that almost all our poets and novelists, both ancient and modern, represent shipwrecks as happening on islands, and make them eventually subserve some great and useful end. Like the seeds of certain plants which are wafted by the wind from one district to another, and take root in their new home, they have been sometimes instrumental in transporting and establishing a race of new settlers much needed for the working out of the right civilisation of the race. One of the earliest shipwrecks of which we read—that of Saint Paul in the sacred narrative of the Acts of the Apostles—was the occasion of bringing healing to the governor and inhabitants of Melita, and, no

doubt, of implanting in their minds the elementary truths of the Christian faith. The Greek heroes on their return from Troy met with adventures enough, among which the perils of the deep were not the least conspicuous. It was a storm, and consequent shipwreck, that drove Æneas to the coast of Africa, where his own followers and the subjects of Queen Dido first made acquaintance, an acquaintance which years after was fated to become memorable in the annals of history. America is believed to have been colonised at an early period through shipwreck; Iceland, certainly the cradle of northern literature, by the same means from Norway in the tenth century. The enchanted isle of Prospero, and the solitary prison of Crusoe, are instances in which our great masters of fiction make use of islands as materials for the embodiment of their higher creations.

Space prevents us from doing more than attending to one or two of the more notable incidents in connection with shipwrecks in and around these northern islands. A large merchantman, during a gale, while attempting to enter Hoy Sound, was hurled by the waves into an immense cave which lies near the opening. The only thing visible of her afterwards was the sea strewn with the vestiges of wreck, and it was universally concluded that all on board had perished. Nearly a week afterwards—while the congregation of Stromness were engaged in sacramental worship—a figure suddenly appeared in their midst, pale and emaciated, and looking as if the sea had given up at least one of its dead. It was the only survivor from the wreck. For days he had subsisted upon the shell-fish adhering to the rocks, which he collected at the ebb-tide; but, at last, armed with the courage of despair, he succeeded in scaling the lofty cliffs which overhang the spacious cave. A few years ago, a Russian vessel was borne helplessly onward to the rocks at Deerness, and her shattered timber thrown right in the midst of the onlookers that crowded the heights above. The following case may be considered almost miraculous. The island of Westray is one of the largest of the group, and shares the general physical appearance of the rest, being low on its eastern side, with a rugged line of almost perpendicular rock; on the west, rising in some places to the height of one hundred and eighty feet. The portion of sea in which it lies is remarkable for the strength and variability of its currents, which sometimes baffle even the skill of the amphibious native. One fine June morning, a vessel was nearing the island. There was little or no wind, but there was a strong tide running, and the sky was obscured by mist. The sails were flapping lazily, but the ship was moving onward at the rate of six or seven miles an hour towards the middle and loftiest part of the sea-wall mentioned above, impelled by the current as directly as the loadstone mountain attracted Sindbad towards the cave of skulls. It so happened that a fisherman had been out fowling early that morning, and at the moment was suspended by a rope over that part of the precipice towards which the ship was moving. She was immediately hailed by him, but without response. The crew were terror-struck; they could scarce believe their eyes, when they saw a man, poised in mid-air, and shouting to them from the rock in a language of which they, being foreigners, were ignorant. By the aid of

signs, he made them understand that they had to betake themselves to the boat, and pointed to the exact spot where they were to row. It was the work of a few minutes, but not a minute too soon. Lengthening his rope, he lowered himself down, and assumed the command. The doomed ship came on, was lifted upon the breast of a swelling wave, and deposited upon a sharp-pointed cliff. Here it remained a few minutes, like a dove perched upon the top of a rock, and then fell back in a thousand pieces. Meanwhile, the crew, rescued from the very jaws of death, were steered by their skilful pilot through the floating fragments, and landed in safety in a distant bay. Neither life-boat nor rocket could have been made available in an emergency of this sort, but the intrepidity and self-possession of a simple fisherman was equal to the occasion. That admirable institution, founded by the late, and so worthily presided over by the present, Duke of Northumberland, supported as he is by the indefatigable labours of the secretary Mr Lewis, and the other officers, was not then in existence, otherwise we might have heard of the rescuer on this occasion being rewarded with their highest honour.

We have confined our attention to the consideration of wrecks that occur on our coasts, and have taken no account of those on the high seas. With regard to these, the chart gives us no information, but from other sources it is gathered that they form about two-thirds of the whole number belonging to all nations in the world. They are usually those of ships of large size; but the great marine highways are now so well known, that they are traversed every year with greater confidence and safety. The ravages of the 'devouring element'—of ships struck by lightning in the tropical seas—seemed to defy human skill, and to add the horrors of fire to those of water. Our commerce is of such world-wide extent, and involves such enormous capital, while the number of our fellow-countrymen engaged in it is so immense, that we hope neither genius nor philanthropy will slacken its efforts in devising means for the protection of seamen and the abatement of shipwrecks.

## WALTER'S WORD.

### CHAPTER XL.—A LAST APPEAL.

WHEN death is drawing nigh us, we do not blink at the truth of matters, as when we have time to toy with it; and Walter, who, though so young and strong, was yet—if he kept his word—upon life's brink, felt his own mind convinced that even if the authorisation still existed, it would not be permitted to leave the hands that held it, since those hands (he felt equally sure) were Reginald Selwyn's. Yet not the less on that account did it behove him to do his best to obtain it. It was a bitter humiliation to have to make application to this man once more, and the more so because to him, and him alone, he had confided that his own life was imperilled as well as that of Mr Brown; but for the latter's sake he was resolved to do so. He accordingly called at the baronet's hotel, to request another interview. The reply brought to him by the servant was, that Sir Reginald had not yet risen. He called again an hour afterwards, and found that he had gone out. As Walter had left a pressing message on the first

occasion, and since his own lodgings were only a few paces from the hotel, it was now evident to him that Sir Reginald intended to avoid him. He therefore sat down, and wrote a letter, in which he once more urged the immense importance of the document with which Lillian had been intrusted; stated his firm belief that it had not been lost upon the way into the town; and adjured him, if he wished to save his father-in-law from a cruel death, that he should use every effort to discover it. 'If it indeed be lost,' wrote he, 'you can certify to that effect, and your personal presence at the banker's may, even as it is, be of some avail.' He added this, in case Sir Reginald had destroyed the paper, from unwillingness to let so large a slice out of the family fortune be sacrificed, rather than with the actual intention of benefiting himself by the merchant's death; or to give him opportunity of repentance and reparation, if he had indeed contemplated so great a crime. To this letter, and not until late in the evening, a verbal answer was delivered at Walter's lodgings, to the effect that Sir Reginald had nothing to add to what he had already communicated to Mr Litton. The method and terms of this reply struck Walter as being equally suspicious; it seemed to him that the baronet was not only resolved not to commit himself to paper, but that he had purposely avoided any direct reference to the authorisation itself. Should Lillian recover, there would, therefore, be no direct evidence (except from Lotty, which was as good as none) that the document had ever been inquired for at his hands; while, if she died—the merchant and himself having fallen victims to Corrali—Sir Reginald would only have to account to his own conscience for his share in the transaction. At the same time, Walter felt that it would be useless to make public this terrible suspicion, that had not indeed sprung up in his own mind in a single night, for it had its roots in long experience, but which must seem to others of monstrous and abnormal growth.

The first thing on the morrow, agreeably to the invitation he had received, Walter once more presented himself at the English bank. Mr Gordon received him with much kindness, and he fancied that there was a smile of something like assurance on his face, as well as welcome.

'Well, sir, and have you found this authorisation?' were his first words.

'No, Mr Gordon; and I frankly tell you that I think it will not be found.'

'But who could have taken it? Of what use would it be to any human being, save to Brown himself, and this rascal Corrali, whose people would be therefore the last to have stolen it?'

'I cannot say, sir,' replied Walter gloomily; a reply that expressed the state of the case more literally than his interlocutor imagined. He could indeed make a shrewd guess of what use it might be to a certain person, but he could not say so. 'I can only repeat that it is not to be found.'

'Well, that is very unfortunate, because it would have made matters comparatively easy,' answered Mr Gordon. 'I have, however, been in communication with my partners on the matter, and they are willing, under the very exceptional circumstances of the case, to make an exceptional effort. We cannot treat, of course, with you as a principal; but if Mr Brown's son-in-law and daughter will come to us in person, prepared to make an affidavit

respecting this document, and to execute a deed guaranteeing us against the loss of the money, it shall be raised by to-morrow morning. It is most unfortunate that Mr Brown's other daughter should be ill, but we must take her acquiescence for granted.'

Mr Gordon evidently imagined that he was not only making a very generous offer, which in truth he was, but also one which would be greedily accepted by the parties concerned; and the gloom that still overshadowed Walter's face irritated him not a little.

'If such an arrangement does not come up to your ideas of what is liberal, Mr Litton,' said he sharply, 'they will differ very much from those of the commercial world, I promise you.'

'Your offer, Mr Gordon, is most liberal, most generous—I acknowledge it with all my heart; but I am doubtful if it will be of any service. Sir Reginald Selwyn told me that even should the authorisation be found, it would be a question with him whether he should make use of it. As a matter of principle, he said he objected to treat with brigands at all, except with the sword; and as for a guarantee, it is my firm impression that he will never give it.'

'Indeed, indeed,' said the banker thoughtfully. 'This is, then, a very serious business, for if Sir Reginald positively refuses to execute the deed I spoke of, we can do nothing. At the same time, I cannot think that he will venture to refuse, in the teeth of public opinion. People will not hesitate to say that he let his father-in-law be put to death, in order that—his wife being, as we conclude, co-heiress—he might inherit his money.'

'My belief is, Mr Gordon,' answered Walter gravely, 'that he will let people say what they please.'

There was a short pause, during which the banker regarded him with fixed attention.

'You have had no quarrel with Sir Reginald, I presume, sir?' inquired he presently.

'There has been no absolute quarrel, but we are certainly not on good terms. I must confess I have no good opinion of him.'

'Well, I am glad to hear that, because I hope you are judging him harshly. Go to him at once, and state the case exactly as it stands. Here are his father-in-law's bankers prepared to advance this ransom upon the guarantee of himself and Lady Selwyn, and on the understanding, that Miss Lillian Brown, on her recovery, and in case of anything going wrong with the money, will join with her sister in seeing us righted.'

'Of that I will be answerable with my life—that is, if my life were worth anything,' added Walter hastily, his thoughts mechanically recurring to the brigand camp.

'Well, certainly, your life would not be a very convertible commodity, Mr Litton,' answered the banker, smiling, 'although I am sure it is a valuable one. I hope to see more of you before you leave Palermo, and under more pleasant circumstances. Above all, I hope to see you again to-day, and accompanied by Sir Reginald and Lady Selwyn.'

Directly he understood that the baronet and Walter had quarrelled, it was obvious that Mr Gordon took a less serious view of the matter, and had little apprehension of any serious obstacle on Sir Reginald's part.



'I will do my very best, sir,' answered Walter earnestly; 'and whatever happens, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Good-bye, Mr Gordon.'

'Nay! don't let us say "good-bye," but "good-day,"' said the banker, shaking hands with him, and accompanying him to the door. 'On Tuesday we have a little dinner-party, and if you will allow me, I will send you a card of invitation to your lodgings.'

A card of invitation for Tuesday! Never, perhaps, did such a simple act of courtesy awaken such bitter thoughts as those which filled Walter's mind as he took his way home through the crowded streets. All about him was full of light and life, but upon his inmost heart the shadow of death had already fallen. His firm conviction was, that his fate was sealed, and that no Tuesday would ever dawn upon him in this world. He could do his best with Sir Reginald, of course—though his best should include no word of appeal upon his own account; if his own life alone had been in peril, he would not have stooped to ask it of him at all—but he had an overwhelming presentiment that his visit would be fruitless.

At the hotel door, he was met, as usual, by the statement that Sir Reginald was not within.

'It is no matter; I will go in and wait for him,' was Walter's quiet rejoinder; and there was a determination in his tone which it was not in Sicilian nature—or, at all events, in the nature of a Sicilian hotel porter—to resist. He walked upstairs, and entered the sitting-room of the baronet without announcement.

Lotty was seated there alone, and thinking, no doubt, that it was her husband, she did not even look up from her employment. Her back was turned towards him, and she was engaged, or appeared to be so, upon some sort of needle-work, but he noticed that she passed her handkerchief rapidly across her eyes, as he entered the room.

'Lady Selwyn,' said he, 'forgive this intrusion, but my business admits of no delay.'

She sprang to her feet, and faced him with a frightened look.

'Oh, Mr Litton, does Reginald know?'—She hesitated, and he could see she trembled in every limb.

'That I am here?' answered Walter quietly. 'No; he does not know it, but it is necessary he should do so. I am come on the gravest errand, and one on which hangs your father's life.'

'O sir, you must be mistaken,' replied she, her eyes filling with tears; 'it cannot be so bad as that. Reginald assures me that it cannot.'

'Your husband cannot know the facts, Lady Selwyn, as I know them. To-morrow will be your father's last day on earth, unless one of two things happens. One is, that the authorisation which your sister brought with her from the brigands' camp into this house, shall be forthcoming.'

'I cannot find it; I have searched everywhere; indeed, indeed, I have,' returned she earnestly.

'Perhaps Sir Reginald could find it, if he tried.'

Lotty's pale face assumed an awful whiteness, and her teeth began to chatter as though with cold.

'No, Mr Litton, he cannot,' she gasped. 'It is lost, lost, lost!'

'You mean, that I am too late,' said Walter sternly—'that it has been destroyed.'

'I don't say that, I don't say that!' cried Lady Selwyn passionately. 'I did not see him do it; but yet, in ignorance of its importance, he may have done it. What was the other hope—the other chance? O help me, help me, Mr Litton, to save my father!'

'The other hope—and the only other hope—lies in yourself.'

'In me!' exclaimed she joyfully; 'then he is saved.'

'In you, and in your husband.' The light faded from her eyes in a moment, and she uttered a deep sigh. 'Yes; you and he have only to present yourselves at the English bank this day, and execute a certain deed, and the ransom will be paid.'

'I will ask him, Mr Litton; I will beseech him; but you know' (here she smiled a wretched smile) 'that I have not much power; and he is so convinced—being a soldier, you see, himself—that the better way is to send the troops. Perhaps—he will be very angry, I am afraid, to find you here—but still, perhaps you will not mind seeing him yourself.'

'I shall most certainly see him myself, Lady Selwyn.'

'And do not give him an opportunity for a quarrel,' continued Lotty earnestly; 'for my father's sake, and for Lillian's, be careful of that. Bear with him, Mr Litton.'

'I will endeavour to do so,' answered Walter gravely. Her advice was good so far as it went; for it was likely enough that Sir Reginald would endeavour to escape what was required of him, by means of a quarrel; but, then, was it not still more probable that he would contrive to quarrel in any case?

'How is Lillian?' inquired Walter. 'You may imagine the pressing importance of my visit here, since I have not put that question before. The porter in the hall, however, informed me that she is much the same.'

'No; she is better,' said Lotty, dropping her voice, and looking cautiously round; 'I can give you that much comfort. She is herself again—quite herself—though, of course, as weak as a child.'

'Ah! if it were ten days hence, instead of to-morrow—to-morrow!' murmured Walter involuntarily.

'Why so, Mr Litton?'

'Because Lillian herself could have then gone to the banker's; but at present that would, of course, be out of the question.'

'O yes, quite. In three days' time, however, I think she would be strong enough to see you—and I am sure it would please her.'

'In three days' time! This woman had already, then, forgotten,' thought he, 'the fate that awaited her father within less than forty-eight hours. What a weak and wavering nature was hers, how impressible, and yet how easily every impression was effaced! How could it have been possible that there had been a time—and not so long ago—when he had thought of her as one of the noblest of womankind! How different, and how inferior was she to his Lillian!'

This was somewhat hard on Lotty, for she had not forgotten what Walter had told her respecting her father, only she did not think matters were quite so bad as he described. She believed him

more than she believed her husband, but it was natural that she should believe the latter a little—not that she did not know him to be untruthful, but because she was loath to think of him so ill, as it would be necessary to do, if Walter were right in his forebodings. She had also the tendency of her sex, to think all risks much less than they were represented to be.

'I suppose,' said Walter, not without a tremulousness in his tone, 'that it would not be possible for me to see Lillian, either to-day or to-morrow morning, even for a few minutes?' It seemed so hard to go to death without bidding her goodbye, though he knew it would cost him so much; as for her, it would cost her nothing in that respect, since it would be dangerous, as well as useless, to tell her how matters really stood.

'Well, you might see her,' said Lotty, hesitating; 'but I could hardly promise that she could see you. Perhaps the day after to-morrow, when she has had her afternoon sleep, and is at her best, she might bear the interview. She has often spoken of you, and even asked for you, though sometimes I doubted whether she knew what she was saying; and considering what you have undergone together, I cannot think there can be any harm—and Reginald has said nothing against it—yes; I really do think we might say the day after to-morrow.'

It was almost a relief to Walter, finding poor Lotty what she was, to hear Sir Reginald's stern voice in the hall (doubtless rebuking the porter for having given his visitor admittance), and to feel that from him he would at least definitely know his fate. It was easy to see by Lady Selwyn's face that she heard it also.

'Shall I go, Mr Litton,' murmured she hurriedly, 'or shall I stay? If you think I can be of any use'—It was evident enough which alternative the poor lady preferred, and Walter was disinclined to put her to pain; moreover, it was as likely that the presence of a witness would harden Sir Reginald in his villainy—if villainy he intended to commit—as that it would shame him into propriety; and again, if the baronet proved obstinate, Walter would be compelled, for her sake, to mitigate the indignation and contempt which in that case he was fully resolved to express towards him.

'It is just as well I should see your husband alone, Lady Selwyn,' said he gently; and Lotty disappeared through one door, as Sir Reginald presented himself at the other. 'It seems to me, Mr Litton, that you are very importunate,' were his first words, as he closed the door carefully behind him. Neither the action nor the unaccustomed pallor of the baronet's face escaped his visitor. They were evidences to him that this man had made up his mind upon the matter in hand, but at the same time was ashamed of his resolution, or, at all events, was well aware that disgrace would be imputed to him.

'Where two men's lives are in such imminent peril, Sir Reginald, I do not think that any endeavour to save them should be termed importunity. The authorisation intrusted to your sister-in-law's hands has, it seems, been lost.'

'You have already had your answer upon that point,' replied the other coldly. 'As to its being "lost," indeed, I cannot say, because that supposes such a document to have been in existence; but, at all events, it has not been found.'

'And I conclude, Sir Reginald, I may take it for granted that it will not be found?'

'I do not understand you, Mr Litton.'

But it was plain by the red spot on his cheek-bones, and the hard glitter of his eyes, that he was well aware of what was meant.

'We are quite alone, Sir Reginald,' said Walter in firm significant tones, 'and there is no reason why I should not speak plainly. The loss of this document, I must needs remind you, which includes also the sacrifice of your father-in-law's life, would be to you a great gain. It behoves you, therefore, for your reputation's sake, if for no better reason, to—'

'My reputation, sir,' interrupted Sir Reginald contemptuously, 'can stand any slur which Mr Walter Litton may choose to cast upon it.'

'I do not speak of myself; I am merely quoting the opinion of Mr Gordon, the banker here, which will, I am sure, be shared by every one of our countrymen in this place, that if you refuse to assist in rescuing Mr Brown from the cruel hands which threaten him, your conduct will be open to the gravest suspicions. The money which it is well known you would inherit by such a course of proceeding, would doubtless be a consideration—but it would be blood-money.'

Sir Reginald was trembling with rage in every limb, but yet he restrained himself, as Walter knew he could never have done, had he been imputing to him less than the truth. 'It is certainly very agreeable, Mr Litton,' said he in a hoarse voice, 'to find that others, beside yourself, are interesting themselves so much in my private affairs; but it is just as well—if they are to be made public—that the facts should be thoroughly understood. You accuse me of concealing, or destroying—for it comes to that—a certain document, the very existence of which I do not hesitate to deny. It is true my sister-in-law has mentioned the very sum you speak of—the monstrous amount of which, by-the-by, seemed well to consort with her unhappy condition—but as to seeing it stated in black and white, that, nobody has done. Yet, because I don't produce it, you go about the town, it seems, accusing me of refusing to assist my father-in-law in obtaining his freedom. I have done my best—and in accordance with the judgment of those best fitted to advise in such matters—by getting the troops sent out, and I am prepared to do aught else—short of what is utterly unreasonable—to further the same end.'

'In that case, then, Sir Reginald,' said Walter gravely, 'my object in coming here to-day is accomplished. I am commissioned by Mr Gordon to inform you, that if you and Lady Selwyn will present yourselves in person at the bank to-day, your guarantees for the money will be accepted in place of the authorisation, and that in that case Mr Brown's ransom will be forthcoming at once.'

'What! the three hundred thousand ducats?'

For the moment, astonishment had dulled Sir Reginald's wits; instead of being ready with an excuse for not conforming to this unexpected offer, he could only oppose an incredulity which the facts must needs overcome. The idea of his personal guarantee being accepted for such a sum as fifty thousand pounds—one hundredth part of which in ready-money he had rarely possessed in his life—had utterly overwhelmed him.

Walter began to think that his own difficulties

were over, and ventured to smooth away those which seemed to present themselves to Sir Reginald.

'Your guarantee,' said he, 'it is true will be but a matter of form. When Mr Brown regains his liberty, he will, of course, be glad enough to pay the money; only, in the absence of the authorisation, the bank needs to be assured of this, by his daughter and yourself.'

'But if he does not regain his liberty, and the money is taken by the brigands all the same?' observed the baronet. 'Supposing even they were to kill him—as you have told me is possible—and these three hundred thousand ducats go into Corrali's pockets all the same?'

'That is to the last degree improbable; such a breach of faith has never been known among these people.'

'Impossible! But is it impossible? that is the question. As to honour among thieves, to be sure there is a proverb to that effect, but it would scarcely justify me, I should imagine, in putting such a temptation as fifty thousand pounds in the way of a Sicilian brigand. No, Mr Litton; I am sensible—you may tell Mr Gordon—of the compliment he pays me; but I must decline to accept such a responsibility—to undertake an obligation which I have no means of discharging—should things turn out amiss—as a man of honour.'

'I must again remind you that we are quite alone, Sir Reginald,' said Walter bitterly, 'and that I know you perfectly well. You have undertaken obligations before now which you had much less chance of discharging than this one, and with much less important objects. Your scruples upon this matter, when I saw you last, and when no such opportunity as the present offered itself, were confined to making overtures to the brigands at all, who, you said, must be treated with, on principle, by the sword alone. Those scruples, it seems, you have forgotten; but you have found others more adapted for the new conditions. I do not doubt that in any case you would find reasons enough to excuse you from following the course which duty and humanity alike point out to you. As for me—if you persist in this wickedness—I shall be a dead man to-morrow night; but do not imagine that I shall die unavenged. I will leave behind me a statement of your conduct, in this matter, towards your relative, which, so soon as the news comes of our double murder, shall be published far and wide. You will be rich, perhaps, for it is possible—I have no doubt you are speculating upon her illness turning out fatally even now—that you may obtain poor Lilian's inheritance as well as that of your wife; but you will never purchase, I do not say the respect, but the recognition of your fellow-creatures. You will be held as a man accursed. That you are brave—in one sense, at all events—I am well aware; but you will not be brave enough to hold up your head when the finger of public scorn is pointed at it!'

'Have you done—have you quite done?' inquired Sir Reginald coldly. 'Have you any more theatrical effects with which to favour me?'

'I have nothing more to say, Reginald Selwyn, except to put the question for the last time: Will you stir a finger to save your father-in-law's life, or will you not?'

'If you mean, by stirring a finger, will I become a party to a negotiation with brigands?—no; I will not!'

'Mr Gordon was right,' said Walter bitterly, as he rose from his chair. 'There was a time when Reginald Selwyn was a gentleman and a soldier; but I know him now for what, in his cruel heart, he knows himself to be, a scoundrel and an assassin!'

Sir Reginald leaped to his feet, but the passion which, in the days that Walter had referred to, would have prompted him to strike his adversary to the earth, gave way immediately to calculations of prudence. He reflected that a conflict with his quondam friend at such a time would be most damaging to his interests and reputation. Walter waited quietly for the expected assault—in truth, he desired nothing better than to grapple with his enemy, with little solicitude for what might be the result of such an encounter; but perceiving that it was not to happen, uttered but one word, 'Coward!' and looking steadily in the other's face, turned on his heel, and left the room.

#### CHAPTER XLII.—WALTER SETS HIS HOUSE IN ORDER.

A great poetess has described for us the aspects under which death appears to man in his various ages; but the welcome which but too many of us are ready to give it, she has forborne to sing. There are many thousands in this little land of ours, I do not doubt, who would receive with joy a summons to eternal peace, if it were only to be cessation from trouble, and nothing more. Only to rest, and to be out of the world, is their piteous desire. It is probable that the establishment of life-assurance societies has prolonged human existence more than all the appliances of science before and since their era. There is many a man for whom not only Prosperity and Pleasure are over, but even Hope itself, who feels not only old age, and poverty and care, growing over him like mosses upon a wall—though, alas, not so painlessly—but comfortless despair; there is many a man, I say, who, if himself were alone concerned in the matter, would certainly end all with a bare bodkin, without much fear of the after-dream. It is true, indeed, that what we fear is worse than what we feel; but the feeling is, in this case, sharp and sensible, while the fear is vague and shadowy. With what bitter but secret smiles do church-going men often listen to homilies about the joys of life, and the eager clutch with which humanity clings to it! Still, doubtless, on the whole, the poet is right; to most men—let us thank God for it—life is dear. To youth, it is especially so, for to them even, if it may sometimes seem that it would be well to die, the Preacher's words are true, that heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Thus, as we have seen, it had lately appeared to Walter Litton that existence had no great boon to offer him, and that he might let go his hold upon it without much regret; but now that he was standing in the shining street, with the sea one smile before him, and the voices and laughter of his fellow-men breaking in upon his ear, it again seemed hard to die. He was not yet three-and-twenty, and in perfect health and vigour; the slight hurt that his few days of scarcity and exposure upon the mountains had done him, or, perhaps, had only seemed to do him, was quite passed away. There was no reason—save that terrible bail-bond of his word he had

given to the brigand chief, and which was to be exacted on the morrow—why he should not live for the next fifty years; breathe the soft air, feel the warm sun, gaze into the pure depths of yonder sky, and eat and drink and be merry with his fellows. If only that little promise of his could be blotted from his mind—and only from his own mind, for no one else would reproach him for breaking it—he felt that his life might be a happy one. Should Lilian recover, of which there now seemed to be good hope, she would undoubtedly accept him for her husband, in spite of any representations of Sir Reginald. To have love, riches, health, and youth within his power, and yet to exchange all to-morrow—to-morrow—for a cruel and lingering death, was a terrible thought indeed.

The contrast did not, however, present itself in the form of a temptation. He did not need to picture to himself the disappointment of the unhappy old merchant at his non-appearance in the brigand camp, nor the mortification of Joanna at that evidence of his want of faith; indeed, they would both, he knew, be glad that he had thus escaped his doom, since it was to be escaped no other way; nor did the thought of the bitter triumph of Corrali over his broken word affect him in the least, for it never entered into his mind to break his word. He was going back on the morrow to his death, as he had always intended to do, should things turn out as they had done; but he had not expected them so to turn out; and his disappointment was very bitter, and his regrets very keen. He had no sense of any heroism in his own conduct, but only of the hardness of the fate that necessitated it; and he was furious against the selfish and murderous greed of Sir Reginald. If religion required of him, in that hour of wretchedness, to forgive the man, who, if not the actual cause of it, had, by his criminal inaction, conduced to it, Walter was not religious; he hated and despised him infinitely more than Corrali himself, and in all the dark turmoil of his thoughts, kept this one clear and distinct before him—that so far as in him lay, Reginald Selwyn should not escape unpunished. There are many good and wise axioms that require to be acted upon with a difference, according to the character of those with whom we have to deal. A soft answer, we are told, for example, turneth away wrath; and it doubtless does so in many cases; but there are others in which conciliation is not only thrown away, but increases the fury of the wicked man, since he conceives from it that he may be furious with impunity. Another excellent precept is, to leave evil-doers to the punishment of their own conscience; but here also it is necessary to be convinced that in the particular case such an instrument of chastisement exists. To have left Reginald Selwyn to the stings of remorse, would have been much the same as to have inflicted a fine of five shillings upon a millionaire for murder. Walter was firmly resolved to inflict no fine upon him, but such a penalty as he must needs feel. He therefore made use of one of the few hours of life remaining to him to draw up a detailed statement of the facts of Mr Christopher Brown's capture and imprisonment, with especial reference to the ransom which would have procured his release; the mysterious disappearance of the authorisation, and Sir Reginald's lukewarmness concerning it; the negotiations with the banker, and the baronet's

refusal to sign the guarantee: nor did he hesitate to point out how, by such a course of conduct, the latter's material interests had been advantaged at the expense of his unhappy relative. This paper he sealed up, and addressed to the British consul, with a request that it might be made public so soon as the fatal news from Corrali's camp should reach the city. Of himself, he said little, beyond describing the circumstances of his compelled return to the brigands, which would naturally afford to his statement the weight which attaches to the evidence of a dying man.

A much more painful, if less important task then claimed his attention, in bidding farewell to Lilian. It was necessary to do this in writing, since, even if he should have the chance of seeing her (which now seemed improbable), it would have been impossible, in her fragile condition, to communicate to her the true state of the case. He did not waste many words upon Sir Reginald, with whose character he knew Lilian was well acquainted, and of whose conduct in the present matter she would hear the particulars from other sources; but he solemnly laid the fate of her father and himself at the baronet's door, and adjured her to rescue Lotty from his hands, which, as he pointed out, it would be easy to do by making some pecuniary sacrifice. 'He has no wish, you will find,' he bitterly added, 'to keep his captive for her own sake; but in his willingness to accept ransom, you will find him the counterpart of Corrali himself.' Finally, he asked Lilian's pardon for the involuntary share he had himself taken in the marriage of her sister with the man who had thus brought ruin on them all. The rest of his letter described the steady growth of his affection for herself, which, although all hope of its fruition seemed denied to him, had induced him to come abroad, in the hope of being of use to her, under circumstances which had given her just cause for apprehension. Unhappily, his efforts to assist her had been unavailing, but he besought her to believe that he in no way regretted them; he had done his best, and failed; but to have done less than his best would have been a greater pain to him than his failure was. Then he spoke of their common youth, and entreated her not to grieve unreasonably, or for long, over his decease. Fate had only permitted them, within the last few days, to express to one another their mutual love; if he had lived, it was true, it would have lasted as long as life itself; but since he was doomed to die, it was contrary to nature and reason that her young love should be wasted on a dead man. He gave her his full leave—'Such a permission,' wrote he, 'will seem preposterous to any other than yourself, but you will feel that I have the right to give it; and I foresee that it will one day be a relief to you'—to marry whom she would. And he wished her happiness in her wedded life. Walter felt that his letter was egotistic; but also that she would make allowance—then and always—for the circumstances under which it was composed. The *Ego* was strong within him. As he looked out from his window, earth, sea, and sky seemed to have the same personal reference to himself that they have to dying men. He saw them now, but after one day more he would never see them. The sun was setting, so far as he was concerned, for the last time save one. The mighty world, so full of light and life, would go on as usual, but not for



him; he was about to drop out of it, and the darkness of the grave to close around him. After that, he knew not what would happen to him, nor did any man know. He could only bow his head in reverent faith. He was not afraid of falling into the hands of God, nor did he repine in an unmanly manner. But as he thought of Lilian, and of all that might have been, but which was not to be, the tears gathered in his eyes. His mind, too, wandered back to Beech Street and faithful Jack Pelter. He did not feel equal to writing to him, but he would learn all that had taken place, and he could trust him to construe all aright, so far as he was himself concerned. By his will, made when he came of age, by his lawyer's advice, he had left him—the only friend who had at that time 'shewn himself friendly'—what property he was possessed of; and it was a comfort to him now to think that, notwithstanding his feckless habits, poor Jack would never want. He had put aside some portion of his ready-money to pay for his own interment in the English cemetery (a favourite spot with him), should his body be recovered from the brigands; and the rest he had allotted to Francisco, as the marriage portion of his bride. These, with the letters, he intended to leave out upon the morrow, in order that they might be found after he had left the city. And now all matters having been thus provided for in this world, he was sitting at his open window thinking unutterable things.

'Signor!'—he started, so deep he was in meditation that he had not heard any one enter his apartment—'signor, I have news for you.'

It was Francisco's voice, the tones of which were always musical, but which had acquired of late—born of his new-found love—the tenderness of a brook in June, 'which to the leafy woods all night singeth a quiet tune;' his passion had rendered him sympathetic, as well as eloquent. 'You have scarcely touched your dinner, my father says; but you will eat supper when you have heard my tidings. The English young lady is better, still weak and worn, poor soul, and a mere shadow to look at: you must not be frightened at that.'

'What! can she see me, then?'

'Yes; she will see you: not to-night, because it is too late, but to-morrow.'

'To-morrow!' The very word seemed to sound forlorn and sad, as he uttered it. 'It will be early, then, I hope, Francisco.'

'Yes; it will be very early. After her night's rest, says Julia, her mistress is at her best and strongest, and she wishes to see you, signor, ah, so eagerly!'

'A thousand thanks, Francisco. You will find that I have not forgotten this good service.'

'Oh, do not speak of that. But you must really eat something, none would think that it was but two days ago that you came back half-starved from the mountains.'

A sharp pang ran through Walter's frame; he had been reminded of a thing forgotten—namely, his appointment with Santoro for that evening.

'Come, signor, let me bring you supper.'

'Presently, Francisco—in half an hour or so; I have something to do first in the town.' He turned back to the window, unwilling to prolong this talk; and Francisco, with an anxious glance at his English friend, and a dubious shake of his fine head, withdrew from the apartment. Immediately

afterwards, Walter took up his hat, and repaired to the usual rendezvous, where he found Santoro awaiting him. He at once informed the brigand that all hope of obtaining the ransom was at an end, and inquired at what hour it would be necessary to start upon the morrow.

'We should be off before noon,' was his quiet reply, 'since it takes much longer to climb a mountain than to descend from it.'

'Then I will be here before that hour.'

'Hush! Not here, signor, but at the end of the Marina,' answered the brigand in low tones. 'This place is growing too hot for me; certain inquiries have been made, I find, and it is necessary that I should leave the town to-night.'

'You do not suppose, I hope, that it is through anything I have said—'

'No, no; the signor is a man of honour; but he has been watched and followed. A brigand's eyes never deceive him.'

Walter could not but think that his companion was mistaken, for not only had he been unconscious of any such espionage, but he knew of none who could have any interest in his coming and going. Still, it was obvious that Santoro was uneasy, and since it was unnecessary to prolong the interview, they parted at once. As Walter went back to his lodgings, he cast a glance up to the rooms which the Selwyns occupied at the hotel, and saw Sir Reginald smoking and sipping coffee on the balcony; and as he was the only man who was likely to take any note of his proceedings, the brigand's suspicion seemed to him more baseless even than before. Walter's supper was brought up to him by Baccari himself, and not, as he had expected, by Francisco, and the good lodging-house keeper was unusually silent. His guest was content, however, to observe the change without making allusion to it, since, to be left alone with his own thoughts, was, on that night which was to be his last on earth, what he most desired.

## ABOUT FUNGI.

It is not to be wondered at that the difficulties attending the study of cryptogamic botany should have made it less attractive than the study of the flowers of the field. It is to be regretted, however, that prejudice should have so long stood in the way of progress in one department of this most interesting branch of botanical research. Ferns, mosses, and sea-weeds have each in their turn had a share of popular esteem. Fungi, or rather toad-stools—for the common notion of fungi scarcely goes beyond these—have generally been regarded with contempt. Yet there is perhaps no more interesting field of study in the vegetable kingdom than they afford, whether we look to the marvellous beauty of form or of colouring which they present both to the naked eye and to microscopical investigation. With the microscope, the study of them becomes truly fascinating. A volume on Fungi has recently been published in the International Scientific Series (*Fungi, their Nature, Influence, and Uses*, by M. C. Cooke, M.A., LL.D.; edited by the Rev. M. J. Berkeley, M.A.,

F.L.S.), which, it is hoped, will awaken a wider interest in the subject.

It is popularly supposed that fungi are to be found associated only with decay; and until within a comparatively recent period it was not unfrequently asserted that they could not grow on healthy substances. 'It is, however, now a well-established fact,' says Berkeley, in his *Outlines of British Fungology*, 'that the most healthy tissues may be affected by fungi, though they rapidly become diseased under their influence.' While it is true that they are to be found in the most noisome places, on dunghills, in damp cellars, or in pestilential drains, it would be a great error to identify them with such places. They love chiefly shady woods, grassy glades, leafy dens, and open pastures. They are to be found wherever there is decaying vegetable substance, while large numbers establish themselves on the tissue of living leaves. Some grow on animal substances, such as leather, horn, and bone. Particular insects are liable to be attacked by them. One species in the West Indies is developed on a wasp, which flies about with its burden till it becomes greater than it can bear; and in a well-known disease to which silkworms are liable, a true fungus plays its part in the work of destruction.

While some fungi are among the most minute products of the vegetable kingdom, others attain an enormous size. Mr Berkeley mentions an instance which occurred in the north of England, where the sandstone walls of a railway tunnel were covered by a vast curtain of fungoid growth. The larger and more fleshy fungi are of rapid growth, and, in consequence of the rapid development of their cellular tissue, they possess an expansive power, of which curious, apparently incredible instances are on record. One of the most interesting of these is given on the authority of Dr Carpenter: A pavement stone measuring twenty-two inches by twenty-one, and weighing eighty-three pounds, though secured by mortar, was completely lifted out of its bed by the growth of large toad-stools beneath it. Rapid in growth, fungi also speedily decay. 'Some species,' says Berkeley, in his *Introduction to Cryptogamic Botany*, 'are capable of exhibiting every phase of growth and of decay in a few hours.'

The colour of fungi depends for the most part upon the contents of the cells, and these are endless in variety. The one colour remarkable for its absence is pure vegetable green (*chlorophyll*); and this, according to the opinion of Mr Berkeley, is probably due to the fact that, like animals, they exhale carbonic acid, and absorb oxygen. When green does occur it is of a dull metallic hue. It is worthy of note that one of these greens is of practical use in art. The most careless observer may have noticed how common it is to find pieces of rotten stick deeply stained with a beautiful green tint. This is the *mycelium*, or spawn of a fungus (*Helotium aeruginosum*); and the wood so stained is used for its colour in the manufacture

of Tunbridge ware. In variety and beauty of colouring, fungi may be truly said to rival the flowers of the field. Associated as they have been in the popular mind only with decay, the common error, that they are disgusting in smell, is not to be wondered at. Some, undoubtedly, are extremely fetid; but many are sweet-scented, such as of newly-mown hay, violets, anise, myrrh, and apricot.

No class of plants presents a greater variety or stranger diversity of forms. To those who love to wander in the woods or green fields in summer and in early autumn, the appearance of some of the larger and more noticeable species must be familiar. The brilliancy of their colouring can scarcely fail to attract attention. The Agarics, of which the common Mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) may be taken as the type, are the best known, from their parasol shape. The most attractive of these is the splendid Fly Agaric (*Agaricus muscarius*), found chiefly in fir-woods. With its bright scarlet pileus, studded with white warts, and its pure white gills and stem, it forms a very striking object. Of all the true Agarics, it is the most dangerous. It has been used as a fly-poison; hence its name. It is used and highly prized by the inhabitants of Siberia for its intoxicating properties. Its first effect when eaten is exhilarating; and it has the curious power of producing erroneous impressions of size and distance. Under its influence, a running leap would be necessary to clear a straw lying upon the road. If it is taken in sufficient quantity, intoxication passes into delirium, which is succeeded by entire loss of consciousness and death. There are some genera of great beauty allied to the true Agarics, such as the *Hygrophori*, from their peculiarly waxy appearance and brilliancy of colour; the *Lactarii*, or milky Agarics, so called from the milk with which they abound, and which drops from them when they are injured; and the *Russula*, which resemble the Lactarii, but are destitute of milk. One of the most beautiful of the latter genus, the Emetic Agaric (*Russula emetica*), with its smooth shining red pileus, and white gills and stem, is also one of the most dangerous. A very small portion of it would serve to produce the most disagreeable effects, such as are indicated by its name. Of other genera, perhaps the most beautiful in form are the various species of *Clavaria*. Some of these are so delicately branched as to resemble the most exquisite coral. Their prevailing colours are pure white and full golden yellow. One is of pure amethyst. There are few sensations of delight keener than those which the mycologist experiences in coming upon groups of these exquisitely coloured plants, while wandering through an ancestral park, or in the green woods at early morning, when the dew is yet fresh upon the grass, and the birds are singing upon the trees, and the world of toil is asleep. Very beautiful also are the forms which even the lower powers of the microscope reveal. In the various species of mould, for example, we find miniature forests of wonderful beauty and delicacy. It is beyond our purpose, however, to do more than recommend the study, and we almost envy the first surprise and delight of one to whom microscopical investigation is entirely new.

In speaking of the uses of fungi, we must limit ourselves to their edible properties. Much useful and interesting information on this subject will be found in the volume to which we have already referred; in Mr Cooke's *Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi*; and in Dr Badham's *Treatise on the Esculent Funguses of Great Britain*. Great assistance will be derived also from two sheets published by Mr Worthington Smith (London, Hardwicke), containing admirable coloured figures of the more common esculent and poisonous species.

In all parts of the world, fungi have been employed as food. The Parisian epicure and the savage of Tierra del Fuego alike value them. In our own country, with the exception of the common mushroom, they have never been highly esteemed, doubtless from dread of dangerous species. Yet there are many unmistakable species which are sufficiently common to be useful, while some are justly esteemed as great delicacies. At least fifty or sixty species are capable of supplying wholesome and nutritious food. More unmistakable even than our common mushroom are the Orange Milk *Lactarius* (*Lactarius deliciosus*), the only one of the genus which has milk so coloured; the Chantarelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*), with its rich golden colour and apricot scent; and the fairy ring Champignon (*Marasmius oreades*). Yet these, though common, are scarcely eaten in this country. They are perhaps the finest of all our edible fungi, excelling the common mushroom, and are highly esteemed in nearly every country in Europe. *Boletus edulis*, belonging to an order (*Polypores*) in which we find tubes or pores in place of the gill-plates of the Agarics, though inferior to those just named, is commonly used throughout Europe. It is easily distinguished by its brownish smooth cushion-like pileus, its greenish yellow tubes, and its thick reticulated or netted stem. Yet this species, though common in our woods, has never been much used in Britain, probably because the genus *Boletus* contains several which are decidedly dangerous. Dr Badham supposes that this is the suillus which was eaten by the ancient Romans. Another species, belonging to the same order, must not be omitted, *Fistulina hepatica*, so named from its resemblance to liver. A slice of it is not unlike beef-steak. It is usually found on the trunks of old oaks, and is much more common in England than in Scotland. Mr Cooke, in his *British Fungi*, states that 'specimens are now and then met with which would furnish four or five men with a good dinner; and they have been collected weighing as much as thirty pounds.' In another order (*Hydnei*) we find the under surface of the pileus beset with spines instead of gill plates or pores. One of these, which is common in our woods (*Hydnum repandum*) is much esteemed in some parts of Europe. The *Hydnum* generally are said to resemble oysters in flavour. Many others might be named which, however, are scarcely so common as to merit the attention of the mycophagist.

It is scarcely possible to give any general rules by which esculent may be distinguished from poisonous species. They can be discriminated only by the study of species. 'The only safe guide,' says Mr Cooke, in his recent work, 'lies in mastering, one by one, the specific distinctions, and increasing the number of one's own esculents gradually, by dint of knowledge and experience, even as a child learns to distinguish a

filbert from an acorn, or, with wider experience, will thrust in his mouth a leaf of *Oxalis*, and reject that of the white clover.' By reference to such figures as those of Mr Worthington Smith, the commoner species, both esculent and poisonous, may be easily discriminated; and many useful hints regarding the method of using them will be found in such a work as Mr Cooke's *Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi*. As a general rule, such as are of sweet odour, especially such as have the smell of new meal, are safe and wholesome. Nearly all that can be said by way of caution may be summed up thus: Such as are disagreeable in smell, or acrid to the taste; such as contain milk (*Lactarii*) other than the one orange-coloured; such as turn blue when the flesh of the fungus is cut or broken (*Boleti*); and, generally, such as grow on wood—should be carefully avoided. And in all cases, they should be used only when young and fresh. Even the most wholesome become unwholesome and dangerous when old or in decay. As an example of this, we may mention the Giant Puffball (*Lycoperdon giganteum*), which is excellent when young, resembling sweetbread, but which has been known to produce serious consequences in its fully matured condition. The common notion, that all which grow under trees are dangerous, is entirely erroneous. It is true of the common mushroom—it should not be gathered in woods. But some of the best species, such as the Chantarelle, the orange-milk *Lactarius*, and *Boletus edulis*, are to be found almost exclusively in woods. In many cases, much of their wholesomeness seems to depend upon the method of cooking them; and with all of them, Mr Berkeley recommends that plenty of bread should be eaten. It has been supposed that salt and vinegar have special virtues in destroying the poisonous qualities of some. There are, however, so many which are perfectly wholesome, and which are at the same time so easily distinguished, that it is not advisable, without special knowledge, to make use of any whose qualities are doubtful.

In France particularly, immense quantities of mushrooms are cultivated. In Paris, they are grown in caves, some of which contain mushroom beds of many miles in extent. From these, large supplies are daily sent to market; and some cultivators preserve them for exportation. Even in this country the cultivation of them is found to be so profitable, that Mr Cooke tells us 'curious revelations sometimes crop up, as at a recent trial at the Sheriff's Court for compensation from the Metropolitan Railway Company for premises and business of a nurseryman at Kensington. The railway had taken possession of a mushroom ground, and the claim for compensation was seven hundred and sixteen pounds. It was stated in evidence, that the profits on mushrooms amounted to one hundred or one hundred and fifty per cent. One witness said, if fifty pounds were expended in twelve months, or perhaps in six months, the sum realised would be two hundred pounds.' Truffles, which grow underground, have always been favourite fungi in Europe, from the time of Pliny to the present day. They are to be found in some of the chalk districts in England, and are imported from the continent. Both pigs and dogs are trained to search them out; and on this special branch of the subject Mr Cooke gives some curious information; though a writer in a late

number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* gives much of the credit of truffle-finding to pigs. Mr Cooke says : 'Some notion may be obtained of the extent to which the trade of truffles is carried on in France, when we learn that in the market of Apt alone, about three thousand five hundred pounds of truffles are exposed for sale every week during the height of the season ; and the quantity sold during the winter reaches upwards of sixty thousand pounds, whilst the department of Vaucluse yields annually upwards of sixty thousand pounds. It may be interesting here to state, that the value of truffles is so great in Italy, that precautions are taken against truffle-poachers, much in the same way as against game-poachers in England. They train their dogs so skilfully, that, while they stand on the outside of the truffle-grounds, the dogs go in and dig for the fungi : though there are multitudes of species, they bring out those only which are of market value. Some dogs, however, are employed by botanists which will hunt for any especial species that may be shewn to them. The great difficulty is to prevent them devouring the truffles, of which they are very fond. The best dogs, indeed, are true retrievers.'

One of the most interesting questions relating to fungi is the influence which they exert in the general economy of nature. We have already referred to the fact, that, like animals, they exhale carbonic acid, and absorb oxygen. In so far, therefore, as the atmosphere is concerned, they do not assist, like other plants, in maintaining the balance between animal and vegetable life. There seems to be no good reason for believing that they exercise, except in the case of certain skin diseases, any baneful influence on health, although speculation has been busy on the part which they have been supposed to play in the propagation and aggravation of epidemics, both among man and the lower animals. Among the lower forms of animal life, they are largely consumed as food ; some insects seem to depend upon them wholly for existence. We must look for their chief influence, however, to the vegetable kingdom ; and here, undoubtedly, they do exercise a very wide influence. The mischief which they cause to timber is great, and is too frequently exemplified on the wood-work of our houses, where one species of the Dry-rot Fungus (*Merulius lachrymans*) is so destructive. The rust and smut, the mildews and moulds which attack the cereals and green crops, are well known to the agriculturist. The gardener is familiar with them among his vegetables and fruit-trees ; and among our favourite flowers, such as roses, we have often to mourn over the ravages which they commit. During the past year, as readers of the *Gardeners' Chronicle* will remember, one of these pests threatened almost to exterminate the hollyhock. The hop gardens, the vineyards, and the olive groves of Europe, the cotton fields of India, and the coffee plantations of Ceylon, all bear witness to their destructive influence. But no more disastrous result, as it affects all classes, has been produced than in the case of the too well-known potato disease. All the earlier theories of the origin of this dire plague have been proved to be erroneous. It has now been established beyond doubt, chiefly by the researches of Mr Berkeley and M. De Bary, that it is produced by a fungus—a species of mould, which at first attacks the leaves, and speedily preys upon the tissues of the entire plant, reducing it ulti-

mately to a state of putrefaction. But greater far than all the mischief which they work is the good which fungi effect in the economy of nature. In regard to dead and decaying vegetable matter, they have been happily called 'the scavengers of nature ;' and if we reflect upon the universality of their presence, the work which they accomplish in robbing decay of its hurtful influences, by changing it into other forms of life, is no less wonderful than it is beneficial.

#### GONE AWAY.

I know a quiet country town,  
By which a river falls and flows ;  
And in the dell and on the down,  
The yellow sunlight glints and glows.

I know a square gray house of stone,  
I never think of but I sigh,  
Beyond whose garden, smoothly mown,  
The rushing engines shriek and fly.

I know a chosen chamber there,  
A fairy figure used to grace ;  
I know an eastern window, where  
Was wont to watch, a fairy face.

I thread the narrow winding street,  
I linger in the lonely lane,  
Which once were trod by fairy feet,  
That will not tread their path again.

I love that quiet country town ;  
It is to me a sacred place ;  
And as I wander up and down,  
Those vanished steps I seem to trace.

And still the hours serenely pass,  
And still the busy river flows ;  
And still among the shining grass  
The yellow sunlight glints and glows.

And there the house is, square and gray,  
And there the new-mown meadows lie  
She used to gaze on day by day,  
In Faith, and dreamy reverie.

Yes, all is there—except the face.  
That little window gapes forlorn ;  
And on me, as I haunt the place,  
The morning sunshine smiles in scorn.

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